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AMENDMENTS

The following amendments are reflected in the attached  
substitute pages 15-20:

In the claims:

1. (Currently amended) A packaging assembly 10 for holding a  
product 12, the assembly 10 comprising:

at least one longitudinal support post 16, each post 16  
having a top end and a bottom end and at least one integrally  
formed locking ~~tabs~~ tab 60 disposed at the bottom end; and

a unitary base 14 having openings 22 disposed therein, the  
openings 22 being configured to receive the bottom ends of the  
support posts 16 in interlocking fashion;

wherein the base 14 and the support post 16 cooperate to  
prevent the support post 16 from moving laterally.

2. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 1 wherein the base 14  
is rectangular and has four corners and an outer perimeter 15,  
the openings 22 being disposed at the corners.

3. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 2 wherein each support  
post 16 is formed from a sheet of paper wound into a tubular

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structure comprising an outer wall 28 and an inner, product-facing wall 30 substantially coextensive with the outer wall 28 and joined to the outer wall 28 at outer ends 32, 34 to define a hollow space therebetween.

4. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 3 wherein each support post outer wall 28 comprises two outer wall members 36, 38 joined at a right angle along an outer edge 40, each outer wall member 36, 38 extends from the outer edge 40 to one of the outer ends 32, 34, the inner wall 30 comprises two inner wall members 56, 58 joined at a right angle along an inner corner 50, each inner wall member 56, 58 extends from the inner corner 50 to one of the outer ends 32, 34, and the outer and inner walls 28, 30 form the locking tabs 60 at the outer ends 32, 34.

5. (Original) The assembly of claim 4 wherein each locking tab 60 is substantially planar and is formed from adjacent portions of the outer wall 28 and the inner wall 30.

6. (Original) The assembly of claim 5 wherein the two locking tabs 60 are oriented on non-parallel planes.

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7. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 6 wherein the locking tabs 60 are spaced inwardly from the outer perimeter 15 of the base 14 and wherein portions 99 of the base 14 abut each outer wall member 36, 38.

8. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 7 further comprising a top cap 20 and wherein the support posts 16 extend from the base 14 to the top cap 20 and fit within the top cap 20.

9. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 8 further comprising transparent film wrapped around the support posts 16.

10. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 8 further comprising a transparent film placed over the product 12 between the product 12 and the support posts 16.

11. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 7 wherein the base 14 is water-resistant.

12. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 11 wherein the base 14 is made from expanded polystyrene.

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13. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 12 wherein the support posts 16 are made from paper.

14. (Currently amended) A packaging assembly 10 for holding a product 12, the assembly 10 comprising:

at least one longitudinal support post 18, each post 18 having a top end and a bottom end and an integrally formed locking portion 90 disposed at the bottom end; and

a unitary base 14 having openings 24 disposed therein, the openings 24 being configured to receive the bottom ends of the support posts 18 in interlocking fashion;

wherein the base 14 and the support post 18 cooperate to prevent the support post 18 from moving laterally.

15. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 14 wherein the base 14 is rectangular and has four corners and an outer perimeter 15, the openings 24 being disposed at the corners.

16. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 15 wherein each support post 18 is formed from a sheet of paper wound into a tubular structure comprising an outer wall 62 and an inner, product-facing wall 64 substantially coextensive with the outer wall 62

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and joined to the outer wall 64 at outer ends 66, 68 to define at least one hollow space therebetween.

17. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 16 wherein each support post outer wall 62 comprises two outer wall members 72, 74 joined at a right angle along an outer edge 70, each outer wall member 72, 74 extends from the outer edge 70 to one of the outer ends 72, 74, and the outer and inner walls 62, 64 form the locking portion 90 at one of the outer ends 66, 68.

18. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 17 wherein the locking portion 90 is polygonal.

19. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 18 wherein the locking portion 90 is spaced inwardly from the outer perimeter 15 of the base 14 and wherein portions 92 of the base 14 abut the outer wall 62.

20. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 19 further comprising a top cap 20 and wherein the support posts 18 extend from the base 14 to the top cap 20 and fit within the top cap 20.

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21. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 20 further comprising transparent film wrapped around the support posts 18.

22. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 20 further comprising a transparent film placed over the product 12 between the product 12 and the support posts 18.

23. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 19 wherein the base 14 is water-resistant.

24. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 23 wherein the base 14 is made from expanded polystyrene.

25. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 24 wherein the support posts 18 are made from paper.

26. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 19 wherein the outer wall 62 comprises an inwardly directed bead 84 having an apex 86 in close proximity with or adjacent the inner wall 64, the bead 84 dividing the corner post 18 into a longitudinal, tubular, hollow subsection 88 and the locking portion 90.

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27. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 26 wherein the locking portion 90 is fully enclosed.

28. (Original) The assembly 10 of claim 26 wherein the locking portion 90 is partially enclosed.

29. (Cancelled)

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Cancelled)

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**I CLAIM AS MY INVENTION:**

1. A packaging assembly 10 for holding a product 12, the assembly 10 comprising:

at least one longitudinal support post 16, each post 16 having a top end and a bottom end and at least one integrally formed locking tab 60 disposed at the bottom end; and

a unitary base 14 having openings 22 disposed therein, the openings 22 being configured to receive the bottom ends of the support posts 16 in interlocking fashion;

wherein the base 14 and the support post 16 cooperate to prevent the support post 16 from moving laterally.

2. The assembly 10 of claim 1 wherein the base 14 is rectangular and has four corners and an outer perimeter 15, the openings 22 being disposed at the corners.

3. The assembly 10 of claim 2 wherein each support post 16 is formed from a sheet of paper wound into a tubular structure comprising an outer wall 28 and an inner, product-facing wall 30 substantially coextensive with the outer wall 28 and joined to the outer wall 28 at outer ends 32, 34 to define a hollow space therebetween.

4. The assembly 10 of claim 3 wherein each support post outer wall 28 comprises two outer wall members 36, 38 joined at a right angle along an outer edge 40, each outer wall member 36, 38 extends from the outer edge 40 to one of the



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outer ends 32, 34, the inner wall 30 comprises two inner wall members 56, 58 joined at a right angle along an inner corner 50, each inner wall member 56, 58 extends from the inner corner 50 to one of the outer ends 32, 34, and the outer and inner walls 28, 30 form the locking tabs 60 at the outer ends 32, 34.

5. The assembly of claim 4 wherein each locking tab 60 is substantially planar and is formed from adjacent portions of the outer wall 28 and the inner wall 30.

6. The assembly of claim 5 wherein the two locking tabs 60 are oriented on non-parallel planes.

7. The assembly 10 of claim 6 wherein the locking tabs 60 are spaced inwardly from the outer perimeter 15 of the base 14 and wherein portions 99 of the base 14 abut each outer wall member 36, 38.

8. The assembly 10 of claim 7 further comprising a top cap 20 and wherein the support posts 16 extend from the base 14 to the top cap 20 and fit within the top cap 20.

9. The assembly 10 of claim 8 further comprising transparent film wrapped around the support posts 16.

10. The assembly 10 of claim 8 further comprising a transparent film placed over the product 12 between the product 12 and the support posts 16.

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11. The assembly 10 of claim 7 wherein the base 14 is water-resistant.

12. The assembly 10 of claim 11 wherein the base 14 is made from expanded polystyrene.

13. The assembly 10 of claim 12 wherein the support posts 16 are made from paper.

14. A packaging assembly 10 for holding a product 12, the assembly 10 comprising:

at least one longitudinal support post 18, each post 18 having a top end and a bottom end and an integrally formed locking portion 90 disposed at the bottom end; and

a unitary base 14 having openings 24 disposed therein, the openings 24 being configured to receive the bottom ends of the support posts 18 in interlocking fashion;

wherein the base 14 and the support post 18 cooperate to prevent the support post 18 from moving laterally.

15. The assembly 10 of claim 14 wherein the base 14 is rectangular and has four corners and an outer perimeter 15, the openings 24 being disposed at the corners.

16. The assembly 10 of claim 15 wherein each support post 18 is formed from a sheet of paper wound into a tubular structure comprising an outer wall 62 and an inner, product-facing wall 64 substantially coextensive with the outer wall

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62 and joined to the outer wall 64 at outer ends 66, 68 to define at least one hollow space therebetween.

17. The assembly 10 of claim 16 wherein each support post outer wall 62 comprises two outer wall members 72, 74 joined at a right angle along an outer edge 70, each outer wall member 72, 74 extends from the outer edge 70 to one of the outer ends 72, 74, and the outer and inner walls 62, 64 form the locking portion 90 at one of the outer ends 66, 68.

18. The assembly 10 of claim 17 wherein the locking portion 90 is polygonal.

19. The assembly 10 of claim 18 wherein the locking portion 90 is spaced inwardly from the outer perimeter 15 of the base 14 and wherein portions 92 of the base 14 abut the outer wall 62.

20. The assembly 10 of claim 19 further comprising a top cap 20 and wherein the support posts 18 extend from the base 14 to the top cap 20 and fit within the top cap 20.

21. The assembly 10 of claim 20 further comprising transparent film wrapped around the support posts 18.

22. The assembly 10 of claim 20 further comprising a transparent film placed over the product 12 between the product 12 and the support posts 18.

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23. The assembly 10 of claim <sup>19</sup>19 wherein the base 14 is water-resistant.
24. The assembly 10 of claim 23 wherein the base 14 is made from expanded polystyrene.
25. The assembly 10 of claim 24 wherein the support posts 18 are made from paper.
26. The assembly 10 of claim 19 wherein the outer wall 62 comprises an inwardly directed bead 84 having an apex 86 in close proximity with or adjacent the inner wall 64, the bead 84 dividing the corner post 18 into a longitudinal, tubular, hollow subsection 88 and the locking portion 90.
27. The assembly 10 of claim 26 wherein the locking portion 90 is fully enclosed.
28. The assembly 10 of claim 26 wherein the locking portion 90 is partially enclosed.